melted snow and ice mingle in their uncertain white patches, among the clumps of reeds, pale reflections of the sky.

Cuverville, 3 February

Apropos of a very interesting letter from Tahiti published in the Journal des missions, I pick up Darwin's Journal and reread to Em. the wonderful account of his stay in the South Sea Islands. I continue the reading alone.

It is a long time since I have read with such a healthy appetite and at the same time with so much gluttony. Each new idea drawn from my reading, as soon as it enters my head, links up with something; it seems to me that I was waiting for it; its place was ready.

I recall certain readings in my childhood, so voluptuously penetrating that I felt the sentence almost physically enter my heart. This evening I again felt that marvelous sensation.

I had stayed in the garden until five o'clock, pruning my rosebushes with Mius under the flurry of snow; came in chilled to the bone, inebriated by the clear air. How beautiful the livid, slate-colored sky was above the russet hill and the leafless trees of the avenue!

In the greenhouse an Iris tuberosa offers me a delicate green and black flower. In the garden almost all the hellebores are in flower.

9 February

I finish the Memoires de deux jeunes mariees? A confused, pasty book; throughout the book, the lineaments of a masterpiece. Singular pressure of the subject. Balzac — that sort of genius he has for making a sudden knot of all his threads; the very first sentence of the book, for instance; that is the sort of thing that only a brain working at a very high temperature can invent.

Genius incapable of criticism. (See the preface to La Fille d'£ve;[9] judgments on the novel in the different countries of Europe.)

13 February

I interrupt my reading of Barres's new book for Archipel by Pierre Louys:[10] scratch collection of calligraphed commonplaces and stupidities, with suddenly an excellent, peremptory article against the reform of spelling; another, very good, on sports in antiquity.

[8] The Memoirs of Two Brides, by Honor6 de
[0] A Daughter of EV&, a novel by Balzac.
[10] Archipelago, published in 1906.